



WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

Steve Bullock
Governor of Montana
Chair

Dennis Daugaard
Governor of South Dakota
Vice Chair

James D. Ogsbury
Executive Director

Headquarters

1600 Broadway
Suite 1700
Denver, CO 80202

303-623-9378
Fax 303-534-7309

Washington, D.C.

400 N. Capitol Street, N.W.
Suite 376
Washington, D.C. 20001

202-624-5402
Fax 202-624-7707

www.westgov.org

September 21, 2016

Honorable Cynthia Lummis
United States House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Timothy J. Walz
United States House of Representatives
1034 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Lummis and Representative Walz:

We are writing in support of your bipartisan legislation, H.R. 845, the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act, that would expand National Forest trail maintenance efforts in the West. Western Governors were pleased to see the House Agriculture Committee favorably report your bill to the full House on September 14, 2016.

Western Governors recognize the urgent imperative to improve forest health in order to reduce wildfire threat and improve watersheds and habitat. We further recognize that Congress has provided tools and programs to facilitate state and private efforts to help the Forest Service improve the health of forests they manage.

Your bill would expand the existing toolkit by facilitating the use of volunteers and guides to help repair and maintain trails on Forest Service lands. In a budget-constrained environment, it is especially important to leverage non-federal resources to maintain trails. Only one-quarter of National Forest trails are maintained to Forest Service standards, and the agency currently faces a \$300 million-plus backlog in trail maintenance.

Well-maintained Forest Service trails are vital to western states' recreation industries. They are used for hiking, horseback riding, camping, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation activities. Please do not hesitate to call on Western Governors if we can help get your important legislation to the President's desk before the end of this Congress.

Respectfully,

Steve Bullock
Governor of Montana
Chair, WGA

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